

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Darlington School of Mathematics and Science (DSMS),
Darlington, Co. Durham

DSMS is a relatively small secondary school of 452 students aged 11-16 on the outskirts of Darlington, Co. Durham. Over 20% are on the SEND register and over 25% receive Free School Meals.

Tina Gray is the Accelerated Reader and LRC Manager, as well as being responsible for Access Arrangements and Care Plans.



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Library

Progress Monitoring

Motivation

Data Review

Intervention

“Improvement has been outstanding across all the Accelerated Reader groups.”

Accelerated Reader (AR) was launched at DSMS in September 2012 with a conscious effort to embed it into the curriculum. All students in Years 7 and 8 have timetabled AR lessons. Some students in Years 9, 10 and 11 still requiring support with literacy and reading skills also have scheduled lessons within their curriculum. Year 11 students have been trained with AR so that they can act as reading mentors for Year 7 and 8 during the daily tutor time.

The library was completely refurbished to coincide with the launch of AR. The library now has three zones: a bean bag area, table and chairs area, and computer area. £3000 of new books complemented the existing books in the library that are available on the programme.

AR has had a huge effect on students' attitudes towards reading. Seven students have read more than one million words and two students have read over two million words. Students are split into four house groups in the school and there is a massive competitive attitude to be the best house and tutor in AR – we have both a house cup and a tutor cup. The winners are announced in the whole school assembly on a Friday.

Not only have students' reading ages increased, their understanding of the text has increased in depth. This has an impact on every subject taught in school.

Certificates, Amazon vouchers and book vouchers are given to students who have improved the most and those who are excelling with the programme.

In addition to the prizes, badges have been introduced for students achieving points linked to their targets. These are currently 50, 100 & 150 points but they have been such a success that these are going to have to be increased as so many students are achieving at these levels now.

Students have a record card to keep track of what they have been reading. They read at home and in their free time, often taking quizzes on books they have borrowed from the town library or have read at home. Students are encouraged to give feedback if they can't find anything they want to read or if they wish to read a book which we don't have. These books are then ordered for the library collection.

Reports are sent out frequently to parents to notify them of their children's progress. Every AR teacher receives a pack detailing which students are identified for intervention and they have been shown how to set targets for their students. A date is set for when students subject to

intervention need to be retested. Monthly meetings are held to share information and good practice amongst the staff. The Deputy Head is extremely impressed with the new charts and tracking information: these were very useful in the recent Ofsted inspection.

Improvement has been outstanding across all the AR groups. When AR launched, 50% of students in Year 7 had a reading age below 10. Within a year, this had improved. Just 11% of that group, now in Year 8, still have a reading age below 10. The current Year 7 group has seen similar improvements: 51% had reading ages below 10 when they joined but now just 14% of them do.

Not only have students' reading ages increased, their understanding of the text has increased in depth. They are now reading with emotion, recognising punctuation, and understanding how punctuation affects the meaning of the text. This has an impact on every subject taught in school, which will undoubtedly be reflected in our GCSE results.



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